

**DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT
CITY OF NEWTON
Massachusetts**

INTER-OFFICE CORRESPONDENCE

DATE: March 8, 2004

TO: Board of Alderman

FROM: Michael Kruse, Director of Planning and Development
Nancy Radzevich, Chief Planner
Eric Jerman, Senior Planner

SUBJECT: #133-03 ALD. YATES proposing an amendment to Ch. 30 requiring a special permit for so-called “snout houses”(one with excessive/intrusive garage on the front) following the example of Ft. Collins, Colorado.

#311-02 ALD. JOHNSON & SANGIOLO requesting that Section 30-23 be amended by including design guidelines to address aesthetic impacts that renovation or new construction have on the surrounding environment.

#294-03 ALD. BAKER, YATES, JOHNSON AND MANSFIELD requesting analysis and discussion of possible remedies for demolition of modest housing and replacement with oversized structures out of character with the surrounding neighborhood, including examining the experience of other communities, including those out of state, who have worked to address this problem. (“mansionization”)

cc: Mayor David B. Cohen

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide the Board of Aldermen, the Mayor and the public with preliminary research, planning analysis, and potential alternatives which may be useful in the Board’s discussion of the proposed Ordinance amendment. The Planning and Development Department is prepared to conduct a more detailed review and analysis of this subject following discussion of Docket Items 133-03, #311-02, and #294-03 by the Zoning and Planning Committee.

In reviewing these three items, the Planning Department believes that the three items (Items # 133-03, #311-02, and #294-03) are related in that they each are being proposed to try to preserve the character of neighborhoods throughout Newton. The term “snout house” is used to describe residences that have excessive and/or protruding garages on the front. This type of design for single and/or two-family residences is not typical in most areas of the City, but is becoming increasingly popular among developers on infill and/or redevelopment sites. Design guidelines are used by many communities, suggested or mandated, as a means to ensure that infill and/or redevelopment of single properties are designed in such a way that they do not adversely affect

the character of the existing neighborhood. The final docket item deal with the recent trend where developers are tearing down modest-sized homes and replacing them with significantly larger homes, which are often times completely out of the scale with the immediate neighborhood.

In the following sections, the Planning Department provides an analysis of each of these docket items, and some suggested alternatives for the Aldermen to consider.

#133-03 “SNOUT HOUSES”

I. BACKGROUND

During fall, 2002, the Board of Aldermen (Aldermen) reviewed and discussed the Planning and Development Board’s (Board) recommended amendment to the Zoning Ordinance in order to provide more clear and precise definitions for “attached dwellings.” While the definitional changes were adopted on December 2, 2002 as Ordinance X-38, that amendment did not include a concurrent suggestion by the Board to regulate protruding garages.

The garage issue had been identified by the Board as a “streetscape” problem, particularly related to when modest-sized residences are demolished and replaced by large structures, which maximize the available building envelope and result in protruding garages that dominate the building façade and impact streetscape. The recent redevelopment of the majority of the properties on Tanglewood Road from ranches to large two-family homes with large protruding garages, exemplifies the concern raised by the Board.

Key aspects of the then draft garage regulation included the following recommendations:

- By right, garage doors shall not exceed 30% of the building frontage (the linear length of the front façade, including the garage portion); and
- A Special permit would be required if garage frontage exceeds 30%.

During the past discussion related to “snout houses” concerns were raised that included a concern that 30% may be too limiting, and also that too many new special permit cases would create an additional burden and clog the special permit process. In addition, a concern was raised that new non-conformities would be created.

Since that time, further concerns have been raised about the negative effects of protruding garages on the surrounding neighborhoods, and Petition #133-03 was filed by Ald. Brian Yates to allow for this issue to be reconsidered.

II. ANALYSIS

A. OVERVIEW OF OTHER COMMUNITIES

The American Planning Association article *Love Me, Love My Garage*, written in 2001 by Ruth Eckdish Knack, AICP, reflects similar garage concerns across the country. A brief look at communities such as Fort Collins, CO, Village of LaGrange Park, IL, Portland OR, and Naperville, IL indicates that these municipalities have implemented or suggested various approaches to control “snout houses”.

These measures can be loosely grouped in the following categories:

- **Architectural features and details** – to soften the perception of garage (and total structural mass) from the street and facilitate blending of garage and main dwelling.
- **Dimensional controls on garage building frontage** – to limit proportion of garage doors or garage frontage in relation to overall structure and to establish offsets between garage fronts and dwelling fronts.
- **Garage placement and orientation** – to encourage locating the garage in a manner, which softens the impact on the lot, dwelling, and streetscape.

III. ANALYSIS OF THE CONTROL MEASURES

A. Architectural features and Details

Some communities emphasize architectural standards by code, comprehensive plan or by voluntary design standards, which serve to ensure that there is a visual connection between the residence and the street, and that the garage does not become more prominent than the main dwelling. The following reflect some of the architectural devices utilized or encouraged:

- Trim details (casings, columns, balusters, etc.) on the garage to give it a more “residential” appearance in relation to the main dwelling.
- Step-backs to diminish prominence of garage doors
- Dormers and window treatments above garage doors promoting a “residential” look.
- Second story habitable space above garages, including step-backs.

B. Dimensional controls on garage frontage

The following summarizes dimensional controls on garage frontage found in selected communities. (Number of bays, size of bays/stalls tend to be regulated separately)

<u>Measure</u>	<u>Newton, MA</u>	<u>Ft. Collins, CO</u>	<u>Portland, OR</u>	<u>LaGrange Park, IL</u>
	Zoning Ord.	Zoning Ord.	Zoning Ord.	Comp. Plan
<u>Dimensional controls</u>				
Maximum garage frontage	[30%]*	50%	50%	
Gar. frontage sp waiver req.	[over 30%]*			
Doors recessed behind facades of main dwelling (or porch)		4 ft.	0 ft.	5 ft
Maximum protrusion forward of living area, if associated with a porch.		8 ft.	6 ft. (with 40% max. frontage)	

*Discussed, but not adopted.

C. Placement of Attached Garages

Protruding garages are typically placed on the street side of a dwelling with garage doors facing the street and extending forward, hence the term “snout” houses. However, various other combinations are possible, including front & side facing; side & street facing; side & side facing; and rear & rear/side/diagonal facing. Of the above, side facing garages provide the opportunity for a “courtyard effect” while rear placement tends to most hide the garage from intruding on the streetscape. Each approach affects the overall use of the lot in various ways, and has advantages and disadvantages as to impact on the amount and configuration of the remaining available open space within the lot. (See illustrations)

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

“Snout houses” do impact the character of neighborhoods and significant change the streetscape, as exemplified by recent redevelopment on Tanglewood Road While the impacts are evident, it is a little more complicated to create an appropriate set of design standards, garage frontage controls, and/or orientation requirements which will achieve the desired result without adding undue complexity to the Zoning Ordinance and its implementation

The above information illustrates some options, which may merit consideration in Newton. As the Zoning and Planning Committee considers whether this issues warrants an amendment to the Zoning Ordinance, the Planning Department recommends that the Committee consider measures which would result in:

- Limiting the garage frontage as a percent of the overall structure.
- Application of architectural design features, which will help “blend” the garage with the main dwelling.
- Orientation of the garage, if possible, to obtain a “courtyard” solution.

If the Board of Aldermen believe that “snout houses” do cause sufficient impacts on the character of Newton’s neighborhoods, and decide to push this item forward for a public hearing, the Planning Department will coordinate with the Law Department to prepare a more detailed analysis and will provide a draft ordinance, based on the recommendations of the Zoning and Planning Committee, for consideration.

Attachments:

American Planning Association article “*Love Me, Love My Garage*”, June 2001, Ruth E. Knack, AICP (See **Attachment A-1**)

Excerpt from Fort Collins, CO, Land Use Code, Section 3.5.3(E), *Garage Doors* (See **Attachment A-2**)

Residential Design Guidelines, Village of LaGrange Park, IL (See **Attachment A-3**)

Figures 110-11, 12, 13, and 14 – Portland, OR, zoning ordinance (See **Attachment A-4**)

Excerpts from “*Workbook for Successful Redevelopment*”, Community First, Inc., Naperville, IL – Garage details; Garage & Driveways (See **Attachment A-5**)

#311-02 DESIGN GUIDELINES

I. BACKGROUND

Design guidelines are used in many municipalities around the country as a tool to be used in conjunction with zoning dimensional controls to regulate the construction of commercial and multifamily structures; their use to regulate single-family, residential dwellings is less common. Whereas zoning controls govern density and dimensional regulations such as lot size, setbacks, building height, building lot coverage, frontage, etc. are used to control bulk, design guidelines generally focus upon the details of a specific architectural design, such as the massing of structures, scale of the features, size, roof design, façade treatments (windows, doors—for both the dwelling and the garage), porches, fences, architectural details, materials, and colors, etc.

Design guidelines can be customized to the specific needs of a community according to its desired level of restrictions placed upon future development. Generally speaking, for an established historic district a municipality may mandate compulsory design guidelines that strictly enforce repairs, renovations, materials, colors, and new construction. When associated with an historic district, design guidelines can be a powerful tool to maintain architectural or historic characteristics of a particular district. Examples of successfully maintained historic districts range in size from Boston's South End neighborhood to the entire island of Nantucket. Boston's South End is governed by a strict set of design guidelines that effectively maintain the uniform appearance of the Brownstone dwellings that epitomize this neighborhood. These particular guidelines specify that in the event of damage to the elements of the façade the original materials must be repaired, rather than replaced.

On the other hand, design guidelines are also employed in residentially zoned areas that do not have an historic designation. The goal of these guidelines is less about preserving a specific architectural style as it is in maintaining the general character of the neighborhood in which the new "infill" structure is proposed. When design guidelines are used for "non-historic" neighborhoods key features are typically identified such as detached garages, wrap-around porches, building height, and distinctive architectural features. Developers are encouraged to include the key features in new construction in order to complement the existing surrounding housing.

II. ANALYSIS

In preparation for ZAP's discussion, the Planning Department researched Design Guidelines that are in use by a number of municipalities. The basic elements covered by these Design Guidelines varied from a basic discussion of recommended building roof structures, site layout, and fences to an extremely detailed analysis of the architectural styles and elements that define neighborhood character, including excellent graphics on the anatomy of windows and façade details. Some of the guidelines used no graphics however many used graphics, photos or a combination of the two to great effect. The images often offer clear, concise, descriptions of architectural elements that are user-friendly and an efficient tool for review. The best examples of Design Guidelines included an analysis and discussion, with associated graphics, on the massing of structures, scale, roof design, façade treatments (windows, doors, porches), size, façade treatment and location of garage, fences, materials, colors, architectural styles.

A. Survey of Municipalities that use some form of Design Guidelines

The following is a summary of some of the relevant design guidelines used by other municipalities:

- ❖ The City of Portsmouth, Virginia's Design Guidelines are user friendly, with clear, easy to understand graphics that depict development classified as either "recommended" or "not recommended." These focus on building setbacks, building height, horizontal continuity, roof shapes, proportion of facades, material/texture/color, entrance and porch rhythm, spacing (of structures), and architectural details. **(See Attachment B-1)**

- ❖ La Grange Park, Illinois was one of the few suburban municipalities surveyed that actually had Design Guidelines specifically directed at single-family residential structure, as opposed to higher density developments and urban settings. In addition to the simple but clear use of graphics the document includes a section on recommended location of parking and brief descriptions of garage design, as referenced in the “snout house” discussion above. **(See Attachment A-3)**
- ❖ Concord, Massachusetts has a set of guidelines, entitled, *Historic District Guidelines*, that was designed to regulate renovations and maintenance requirements for residential dwellings in the town’s historic district. Although these are guidelines for their historic district, the Planning Department believes that they have features that could be adapted to general design guidelines. Included with the guidelines is a 36-page introduction that has photographs of local homes that are distinctive and representative of certain architectural styles. The Design Guidelines section is almost 60 pages long and uses photographs of architectural elements rather than drawings in its detailed description of design elements that are subject to review, including chimneys, gutters and downspouts, fences, stone walls, landscaping, paving, septic mounds, roofs, façade treatments, etc. Also included are sections on definitions, additional resources, and appendices on architectural design concepts, descriptions and graphics of different architectural styles, and local as well as federal design standards for historic districts.
- ❖ The Town of Victoria Park, Western Australia has developed a moderately sized document that includes list of architectural elements impacted by the Design Guidelines, as well as graphics to illuminate appropriate execution of roof angles, fences, ornamental details, and building form within the streetscape.
- ❖ The City of San Francisco, California has an exhaustively thorough document with extensive use of graphics. It includes an introductory description of the term “neighborhood character” and chapters on architectural features, and building details. The appendix includes an excellent Design Review Checklist **(See Attachment B-2)** which essentially asks the petitioner to consider the surrounding neighborhood’s architectural elements when designing everything from windows to the building’s scale and rooftop features.
- ❖ The City of Surprise, Arizona has a moderately sized document that makes good use of graphics to explain architectural details and building forms, however, because it is a western city, there is no discussion of the architectural styles that may be common in Newton. **(See Attachment B-3)**
- ❖ The City of Sacramento, California has a brief document that includes a *Form B* **(See Attachment B-4)** that is essentially a checklist for the petitioner to indicate the type or style of architectural element(s) is/are being proposed.
- ❖ The City of Cambridge does not have an established set of Design Guidelines for single-family residential structures. However, the city has a number of Neighborhood Conservation Districts (NCD)’s, including Avon Hill, Marsh, and Mid-Cambridge

neighborhoods. Each of the NCD's has their own *Goals and Guidelines* which offer only general objectives and lists of design elements of proposed construction that will be reviewed in the context of the surrounding neighborhood.

- ❖ The City of Aspen, Colorado has a brief document with some graphics that outlines essential elements of residential design standards in a general manner. There is no discussion of different architectural styles. Discussion in the document focuses on site design, building form, parking and garage layout, and general building elements.
- ❖ The Twin Cities region of Minnesota offers an example of suggested Design Guidelines that specifically was designed for the remodeling of existing Cape Cod and Rambler style homes that are common to the neighborhoods in the region. **(See Attachment, B-5)** The workbook offers case studies of home owners who remodeled their existing homes in a manner that preserved the general massing and style of the original home but still afforded additional square footage to meet the living style and space expectations of contemporary families.
- ❖ The City of Walnut Creek, California uses a design review guidelines that has very detailed and densely formatted textual information on landscape design, residential and commercial architecture, and signs. There are no graphics or photos. One of the topics covered is paint colors—they should compliment not copy nearby structures, and vents, gutters, downspouts, flashings electrical conduits, etc. should match the color of the adjacent surface. Also discussed is the need for variation of building form to avoid visual monotony. Also included is a statement that reads, “the location of the house on the lot, windows, orientation, building height, and location of on-site open spaces shall consider preservation of the privacy of adjacent development.”
- ❖ The Lower West Side neighborhood of Buffalo, New York, has recently put out a second edition of its design guidelines. In the forward to the second edition it is noted that while the design guidelines have value in that “they carry forward important knowledge about what makes good city neighborhoods.” The second edition was developed as a means to “report and evaluate” the success of the first edition of design guidelines, that were developed eight years earlier. The author notes that the first edition of design guidelines was voluntary and that in while there were improvements to the neighborhood as a result of the guidelines, “clearly, there are limits to the impact that any purely voluntary guidelines will have. Certainly, a process of mandatory design review based on such guidelines would have far more impact.”

B. The following documents were also studied, but appear to be less relevant:

- ❖ The City of Boston's South End and Back Bay neighborhoods are historic districts that are governed by Design Guidelines that do not include graphics but which do include a definitions section, and detailed descriptions of design elements such as entrances, masonry, exterior walls, and door & window treatments. Also included is a section on what is exempted from review (exterior lighting, door hardware awnings, portable air conditioners, etc.)

- ❖ The Town of Brookline has a set of Design Guidelines, however it does not address single family residential dwellings. According to Town staff, Brookline is in the process of applying for grant money to pay for the development of future Design Guidelines for single family residential dwellings.
- ❖ Oak Bluffs, Martha's Vineyard has a brief document that outlines the *construction types* and *building elements* that fall under the purview of the local Historical Commission.
- ❖ The City of Mill Valley, California has only an environmental design review for landscaping but nothing that covers structures.
- ❖ The City of Davis, California has a draft design review document that is essentially a review of zoning dimensional requirements, and not true Design Guidelines.
- ❖ The City of Seattle, Washington has a moderately sized document that has a good use of a combination of graphics and photographs but the document is aimed at an urban environment with multi-family structures and therefore does not cover single-family residential structures.

C. **Citizen-Inspired Guidelines**

As a result of teardown and infill development effecting their neighborhood, concerned citizens in Naperville, Illinois developed a workbook that offers suggestions for new construction in established neighborhoods. **(See Attachment, B-6)** The workbook is marketed as an “idea and resource guide”—breaking down the design of a home into a composite of individual architectural elements. Essentially, the workbook is a primer for designing a home that will be an aesthetically pleasing “fit” with the existing, surrounding neighborhood. Adherence to the workbook’s suggestions is entirely voluntary on the part of those seeking building permits. The workbook is composed of two principal sections or “Steps.” The first Step walks the reader through the process of familiarizing themselves to the existing conditions of their neighborhood, block, adjacent homes, and their particular site. Step two offers strategies to design new construction or remodels based upon the architectural elements that were identified in Step one. Everything from roof pitch to garage details are examined and offered for the reader to consider when designing their proposed construction.

III. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Newton’s Planning Department has done some research into Design Guidelines used in municipalities around the country and has assembled an appendix with excerpts from some of the more successful ones. It is hoped that these examples will assist the discussion on how Design Guidelines may be crafted for use in the City of Newton. **(See Appendix)**

The research that was conducted into design guidelines by the Planning Department revealed that design guidelines come in various forms. There was a range of the level of the specific information covered by the guidelines, and some included helpful graphics and photos while others were purely textual. On the whole, there were few examples of

existing design guidelines for single-family residential neighborhoods, that were not a part of an established historic district. The guidelines for these non-historic district residential areas were all voluntary in their enforcement. As was mentioned in the example from Buffalo's Lower West Side neighborhood's design guidelines, second edition, the results of employing a purely voluntary design guidelines may be mixed.

In the discussion on the concept of design guidelines, the ZAP Committee should consider the following:

1. The extent of the guidelines—should they include any or all of the following: rooflines, windows, porches, massing, bulk, garage/parking locations, façade treatments, materials, and/or architectural style.
2. The method of application—should the guidelines be mandatory or voluntary? Should there be a threshold where the guidelines become mandatory (i.e., if F.A.R. is increased by more than 15% then must go through administrative review for compliance with guidelines).
3. Where should the guidelines be applied—should design guidelines be adopted Citywide or on a limited basis, through the overlay or conservation districts?
4. Review of the design guidelines—who is the appropriate person(s), Board, Committee or Commission to review buildings against the design guidelines, if adopted?

If the Board of Aldermen believe that design guidelines do cause sufficient impacts on the character of Newton's neighborhoods, and decide to push this item forward for a public hearing, the Planning Department will work with the Law Department to prepare a more detailed analysis and will provide a draft ordinance, based on the recommendations of the Zoning and Planning Committee, for consideration.

Attachments

Design Guidelines, Portsmouth, Virginia. (**Attachment B-1**)

Residential Design Guidelines, City of San Francisco, California. (**Attachment B-2**)

Design Guidelines, Surprise, Arizona. (**Attachment B-3**)

Minimum Design Standards For New Construction of Single and Two Family Dwellings, Form B, Sacramento, California. (**Attachment B-4**)

Cape Cods & Ramblers, A Remodeling Planbook for Post-WWII Houses. Twin Cities area, Minnesota. (**Attachment, B-5**)

Workbook for Successful Redevelopment, An Idea and Resource Guide for building in established neighborhoods. Naperville, Illinois, (**Attachment, B-6**)

#294-03 “MANSIONIZATION”

I. BACKGROUND

Newton has recently seen a large number of small, modest-sized homes being demolished and replaced by significantly larger-scaled residences. These not only impact the character of the neighborhoods, but also reduce the number of “reasonably” priced homes in the City.

The result is that many of the children of life-long residents, municipal employees, and/or others who work in the community are not able to afford to live in Newton.

II. ANALYSIS

As was mentioned in the discussion above, the Planning Department believes that the use of Design Guidelines may be one way to deal with the tear-down of moderately sized homes and the subsequent construction of much larger homes (i.e. “mansionization”) Their effectiveness is limited by the method of enforcement.

Another method would be to try to specifically amend the zoning ordinance to include regulations specifically geared to controlling the mass and bulk of the structures. Although Massachusetts General Laws (M.G.L.) Chapter 40A states that no zoning ordinance shall regulate or restrict interior area of single-family residences. However, FAR restrictions have been utilized by many municipalities, including Newton, because it ties the size of the residence the lot size. While FAR can control the size of the structure, in relation to the lot size, it does not regulate the bulk or shape of the structure, nor the façade. In fact, in many cases, in the reconstruction of residences, the new homes are built to the extent permitted, and are box-like in appearance, reflecting FAR and the setback controls. This exaggerates the mass of the structure, and generally is out of character with the surrounding neighborhood.

The other limitation of the Newton’s FAR requirement is that they are only applicable for new construction, and does not apply to expansions of existing structures, where ***less than 50% of the structure is demolished***. As such, existing structures can be expanded significantly, if they are designed in such a way to minimize the amount of demolition.

III. ANALYSIS OF OTHER COMMUNITIES

In preparation for the Zoning and Planning Committee’s discussion on this item, the Planning Department contacted other communities to see how they control bulk and/or how they deal with the mansionization issue.

The Town of Dennis has a 15% lot coverage restriction for new construction with a limit of 2 1/2 stories, and has adopted an F.A.R. for reconstruction on non-conforming lots that exceed the 15% lot coverage. The F.A.R. is basically two usable stories at 15% lot coverage (the half story being considered a low ceiling storage type area), or an FAR of .3.

The Town of Weston has addressed the problem of mansionization with a zoning provision that triggers site plan approval for houses over a certain size. The staff was most concerned about the impact a larger house has on abutting residents and the neighborhood with respect to its exterior lighting, the removal of trees and/or vegetated buffers, stormwater impacts, etc. The provision employed is the Residential Gross Floor Area “RGFA” and is measured from exterior wall to exterior wall, and includes garages, walk out basements, “conditioned” space in an attic, screen porches and accessory buildings, such as cabanas, detached garages, etc. The Town Planning Department

regularly reviews homes in excess of 7,500 s.f. Other Massachusetts towns that employ Site Plan Review of teardowns include the Town of Eastham.

The Town of Brookline uses F.A.R. as a tool to regulate the size of new construction, as outlined in their Zoning By-Law's Table of Dimensional Requirements. In the 1970's the Town addressed growing concern about teardowns being replaced with "mansions" by lowering the F.A.R. for all zoning districts, Town-wide. However, garages, unfinished basements and attic spaces were not counted in the F.A.R. calculation.

The result of this action has been that most of the existing structures are non-conforming to the Bylaw's dimensional requirements. Any requests for new construction or remodeling triggers the need for a special permit, and in some cases may require a variance from the Zoning Board of Appeals. The success of Brookline's actions on F.A.R. appear to be mixed. On the one hand, the Bylaw limits the mass and bulk of new construction and remodels. However, it can also be argued that the Bylaw failed to regulate the mass and bulk of residential homes associated with garage, basement and attic spaces. When a homeowner proposes to remodel or renovate unfinished portions of their house—even when the net impact will not be visible from the exterior of the home—they may be forced into unreasonable permitting and zoning review processes. It is unclear if this is a significant benefit in effort to limit increases residential structures.

In response to concerns about mansionization, the City of Naperville, Illinois formed a group to study the rising numbers of teardowns of modest homes that were being replaced with much larger homes. The Teardown/Infill Development Task Force developed a study that addressed the situation and developed some recommendations. The study identified that the "primary issues resulting from infill development are excessive bulk (visible from the public right-of-way) and impact on neighborhood character." The recommendations for addressing these concerns included: landmarking for historically significant structures, increased the existing F.A.R. regulations, reducing the maximum building height, linking side yard setbacks to lot width, adjusting front yard setbacks to reflect a neighborhood standard, increasing the minimum lot size, and restricting attached garages.

Naperville's recommendations for revisions to their city's F.A.R. include establishing a relationship between the size of the home and the size of the lot. Their recommendations included a suggested formula that could be used to calculate an allowable increase in F.A.R. permitted for new construction and remodels. **(See Attachment C-1)**

III. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Planning Department suggests that an effective strategy for addressing mansionization may be to combine the use of Design Guidelines with other zoning controls such as changes to the current Floor Area Ratio (F.A.R.) regulations.

In considering this item, the Planning Department suggests that the Zoning and Planning Committee consider the following:

- Amending the zoning ordinance to **reduce** the maximum permitted FAR in all zoning districts.
- Amending the zoning ordinance to reduce the maximum permitted FAR by-right, but to allow for higher FAR's by special permit.
- With the above, the Board may want to consider utilizing design guidelines to control the façade bulk along the streetscape, which can soften the impacts of larger scale homes; this may be a tool that could be applied to those who are seeking a special permit to increase the FAR of the structure;
- If the Board believes this is only an issue in certain areas of the City, then utilization of overlay districts may be an appropriate tool, which include additional FAR restrictions, based on the average FAR of the existing structure within this area. Further, the Board may want to limit the amount of additional floor area, for these types of districts. For example, in certain areas, it may be appropriate to limit all expansion and/to reconstruction to a 15-20% increase over the existing floor area.

If the Board of Aldermen believe that “mansionization” is an issue that is causing impacts on the character of Newton’s neighborhoods, and decide to push this item forward for a public hearing, the Planning Department will coordinate with the Law Department to prepare a more detailed analysis and will provide a draft ordinance, based on the recommendations of the Zoning and Planning Committee, for consideration.

Attachments

Teardown/Infill Development Task Force Study, Naperville, IL (See Attachment C-1)